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WORK OF THE YOUNGER ARCHITECTS

The fourteenth annual exhibition recently held by the Chicago Architectural Club at the Art Institute compared favorably with its predecessors, and marked an improvement over them in several respects. One of these was the reduction in wall-space covered, chiefly by the omission of the usual quota of great projects from the various architectural schools, which to the average visitor have a



PANEL FROM A DECORATION FOR A BILLIARD-ROOM
IN ROCHESTER, N. Y.

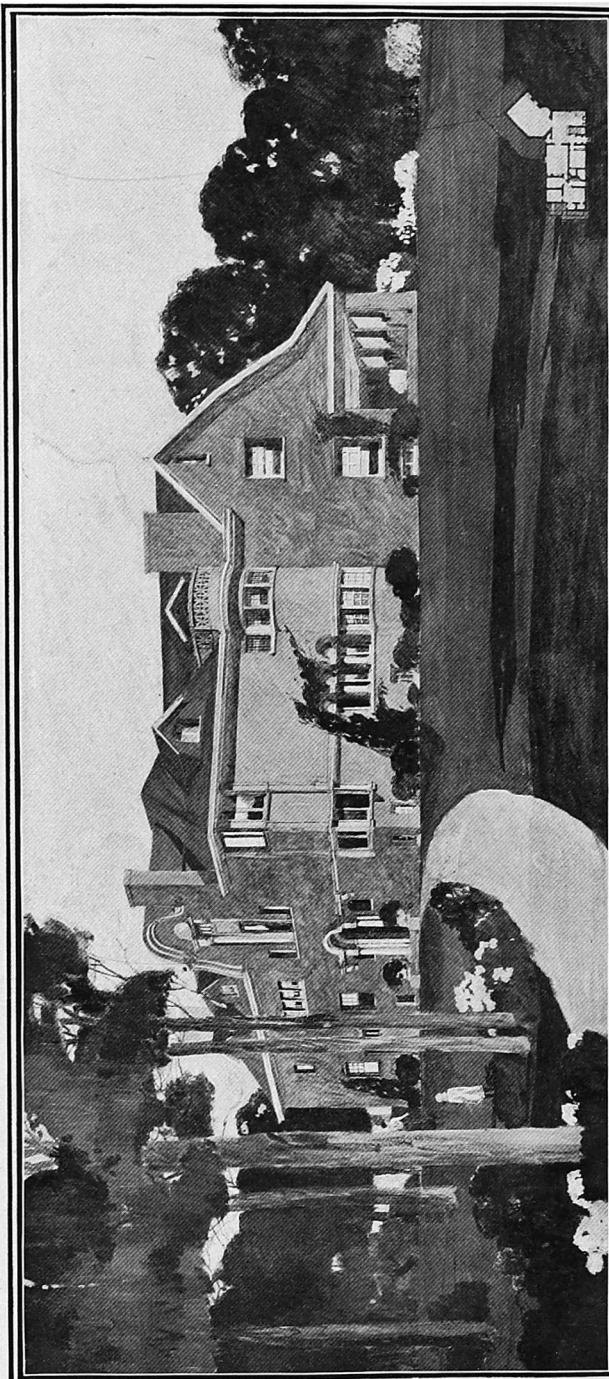
By Harvey Ellis

rather monotonous sameness in design and in manner of presentation. Another was the grouping of the more pictorial drawings and sketches of the local men in a small room by themselves.

The "Book of the Exhibition" has again changed its form, and between very elegant and tasteful board covers text and plates are

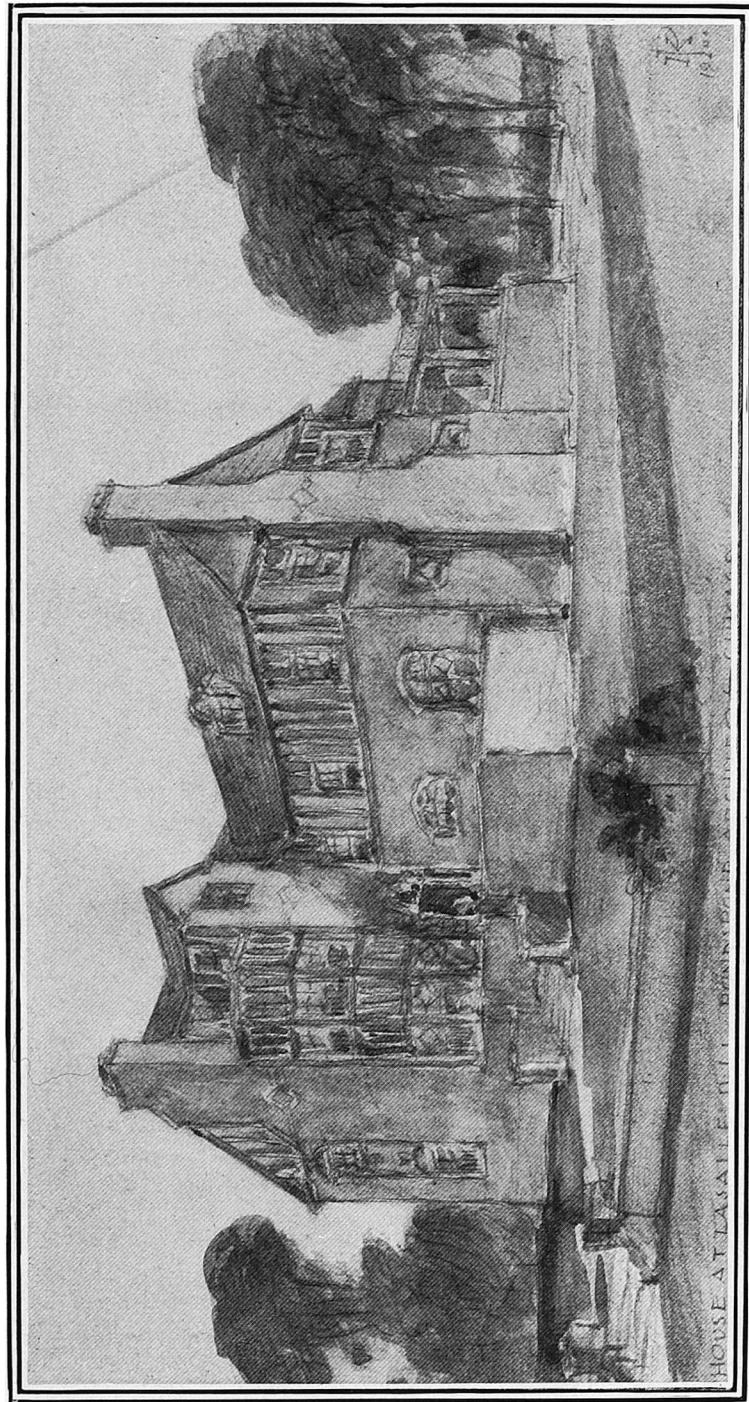
middle of a row of hodge-podge American mercantile buildings of the cast-iron Renaissance and Victorian Gothic periods. They have just tried the same thing in Chicago, and some very good people doubtless insist that the thing, having actually been done, is certainly possible. But one may trust that they will in time discover their error. It is not to be hoped that the Roman temple will be made harmonious with its fellow-buildings by a wave of classic renewal which shall give the "followers of Phidias" full sway over entire mercantile blocks in business districts.

This war of the styles, this clash of the schools, and of no schools, brings forward naturally for consideration the work of the Chicago Architectural Club, past, present, and prospective, and its actual as well as



HOUSE AT LAKE FOREST, ILL.

John T. Hetherington, Architect

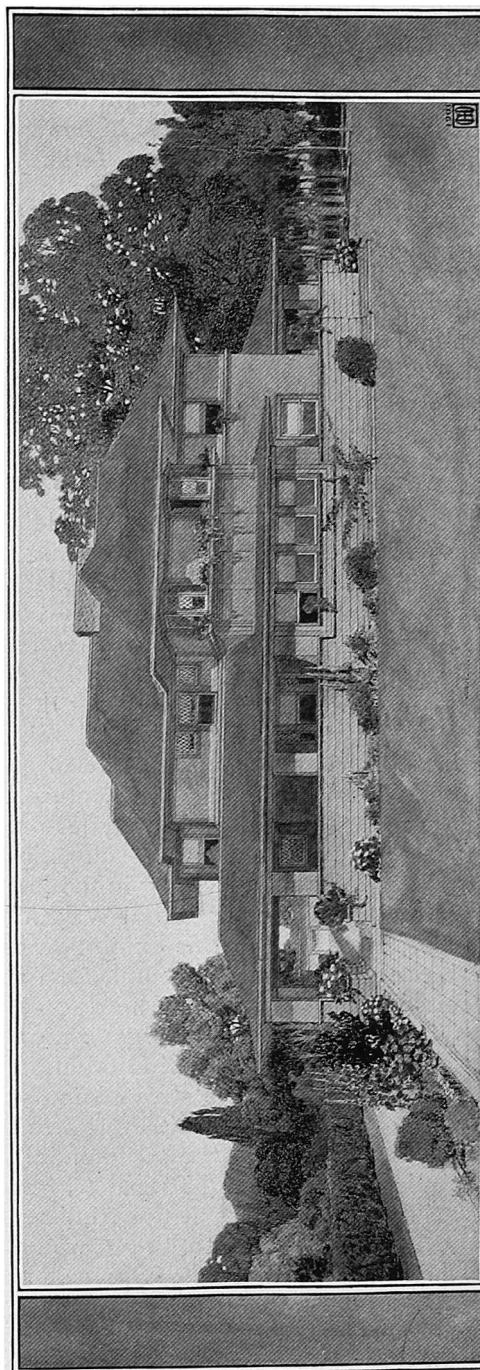


HOUSE AT LA SALLE, ILL.
Pond & Pond, Architects

its possible influence as a factor in the development of a local, possibly of a national, architecture.

Originally merely a draughtsman's sketch club, this organization has thriven and kept pace with the progress of the similar clubs in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, profiting by their example and by their experiments, and making innovations of its own in turn, which have set a pace for the eastern men. Under the presidency of George R. Dean, the club first began to broaden its field of action, and under his enthusiastic leadership of a "squad" of constant draughtsmen, the club's admirable plan for the improvement of the Chicago lake front was completed, as delineated in the splendid bird's-eye water-color by Hugh Garden. Soon after the club acquired its very comfortable and advantageous quarters in the Art Institute, and with its various classes and competitions has done each year much valuable and earnest work.

While the older architects, with their established reputation and large commissions have been putting up big buildings, these younger architects and draughtsmen, still little known to the public, have been developing their knowledge and skill, cultivating their finer perceptions of



A HOUSE AT HIGHLAND PARK, ILL.
Hugh M. G. Garden, Architect

beauty, and trying to solve seriously some of the problems of modern municipal architecture which in the rush of commercialism are permitted to go by default.

In the winter of 1898, eight or ten of the older men, all practicing architects, arranged to take in hand certain problems in design, each choosing by lot six or eight of the younger members to assist him, each group being designated as a "squad," and each leader as a "patron." A number of interesting projects were successfully worked out, each patron being given an evening at the club for showing the work of his "squad" and explaining it in detail, a general discussion following. Among the problems of public interest thoughtfully handled were a great central produce market and warehouse for rail, boat, and city traffic, under Dwight H. Perkins; an elevated loop railway station for State and Van Buren streets, under Robert C. Spencer, Jr.; and an extension of the Art Institute, under Edward M. Garden.

Last year's annual exhibition was probably the most interesting ever held by the club, augmented as it was by the splendid collection of photographic drawings and models of old and new tenements and cottages by the Improved Housing Association, and the Arts and Crafts Society's furnished tenement. For the first time was exhibited also the remarkably beautiful and unique pottery produced experimentally by Mr. Gates and his associates of the American Terra-Cotta and Ceramic Company, at their kilns near Crystal Lake, Illinois. The old club catalogue, with its border of advertising matter marring many pages, gave place to the first "Book of the Exhibition," published entirely through the generosity of patrons interested in promoting public interest in good architecture. To the array of illustrations were added several special articles on topics of interest to architects, making the book a valuable souvenir of a noteworthy exhibition, the most unique and interesting individual architectural feature of which was the work of Frank Lloyd Wright.

Closely following this exhibition came the first annual convention of the year-old Architectural League of America, a federation of architectural clubs, formed in 1899 at Cleveland. The work of the convention perfected the organization and was attended with marked enthusiasm, the Chicago club taking a prominent part in the proceedings, and contributing a strong impulse in the direction of the so-called "new movement" in architecture as distinguished from the widespread fashion-mongering of the commercially successful "great architects" of to-day. Mr. Wright's paper, read before the convention, and Mr. Sullivan's address at the Auditorium banquet, certainly appeared to add fresh strength to the growing revolt against the present universal blind following of dry precedent in modern building, regardless of the development of new materials, new methods of construction, and new needs.

In the selection of the League's governing body for the year now

ending Chicago was equally honored, Joseph C. Llewellyn being chosen president of the League. With him have served upon the executive committee of the League, Hugh M. G. Garden, Richard G. Schmidt, Emil Lorsch, and Robert C. Spencer, Jr. Mr. Llewellyn and Mr. Spencer will represent Chicago at the coming convention of the League to be held at Philadelphia in May, where the work of the committee on education will doubtless bring forth many suggestions helpful to the schools and to the profession, through the various addresses being prepared for the occasion on the special topics assigned to the various clubs for discussion and through the debates likely to follow the reading of these addresses.

To New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago were assigned the questions, "Should the study of architectural design and of the historic styles follow and be based upon a knowledge of pure design?" and "How can pure design best be studied?" An interesting evening was spent at the club not long ago in discussing these questions, which are awakening a powerful interest among the younger men in the profession, and through Mr. Spencer as her representative at Philadelphia, Chicago will advocate the affirmative, as opposed to the present methods of the leading architectural schools here and abroad.

From the foregoing rough outline of its work during recent years, it will be seen by those who have paid a little attention to such matters that in the Architectural Club Chicago has a large and enthusiastic body of workers in a very trying and uncertain field, an organization thoroughly alive, energetic, and ready to do much to abolish civic ugliness and add to civic beauty, if given the chance. In proof of this the gratuitous designing of shelter and playground inclosures for the small parks commission by members of the club and the work done on other municipal problems bear strong witness.

Yet the architect members of the club fail to receive from the public any substantial recognition of the artistic merits of their work as exemplified in their contributions to the annual exhibitions at the Art Institute. In architectural as in pictorial and plastic art, Chicagoans do not yet seem to show much appreciation of mere talent unattended by social or commercial prestige, and only seeks those who have in some way acquired fame, whether deserved or not. In fact, the architects sympathize keenly with the artists in their cry for a more intelligent and discriminating public, a public interested in architecture as a fine art rather than as mere building for investment or commercial purposes.

In these annual exhibitions the local contributors have learned that no commissions will come to them through such a showing of their work. And yet in any great city, where a young architect's buildings are few and widely scattered, he can only become known to an interested and discriminating public by some such exhibition of drawings and photographs of his work. Very few ever see his build-

ings until he "arrives," builds downtown, and has a great vogue, and becomes too successful and too commercial to study his work or to stamp it with his own genius and individuality.

May the day come when the rising architectural genius may receive commissions from appreciative strangers on the strength and beauty of his work as shown on paper at these public exhibitions which are free to all citizens. Our cities would gain beauty through early recognition and substantial encouragement of talent on the part of their citizens, and successful mediocrity would receive less beyond its due reward.

ROBERT C. SPENCER, JR.



FRAGMENT FROM A DECORATION
By Harvey Ellis